



Module One

Peer Support
for Breastfeeding

best start
meilleur départ

by/par health *nexus* santé

- Getting to know the peers-in-training
- Breastfeeding and peer support
- Myths and misinformation about breastfeeding
- Feeling supported
- Self-care
- The Peer Resource Guide

Activity: Human Bingo

1



Activity: Breastfeeding is ...

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When breastfeeding is the norm ...

- Little girls have many opportunities to see women breastfeeding and learn about positioning and latching
- Mothers, sisters, and friends have breastfeeding experience and knowledge to share
- Learning to breastfeed will be about understanding the behaviours of babies and how they relate to feeding and nurturing, not about breastfeeding techniques

Breastfeeding and Peer Support

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From a newspaper in Venezuela
Slide adapted from the Quintessence Foundation



Choose a
caption for
this photo?

From a newspaper in Venezuela
Slide adapted from the Quintessence Foundation

Local woman questions President about housing policies

- Notice that no one seems at all concerned about the fact that the woman is breastfeeding.
- Imagine this photo with a Canadian politician instead of the Venezuelan president ...

When breastfeeding is not the norm ...



When mothers have breastfeeding problems ...

- There are not many other mothers with whom challenges can be shared
- Formula is often the suggested solution
- Weaning is encouraged so the mother can “get back to normal”
- The quality or quantity of the mother’s milk is often questioned
- Friends and family may have little or no breastfeeding experience, so their solutions are from a bottle-feeding perspective
- Finding people with expertise in solving more complex breastfeeding problems can be challenging
- Advice from doctors or others may not be helpful

The result is early weaning

- More than 90% of mothers in Canada start out breastfeeding
- Only 26% breastfeed exclusively for six months
- About 25% have stopped breastfeeding by the time the baby is 1-month-old

Imagine ...

- You've just started a new job
- It's a job you wanted for a long time
- You're excited
- You couldn't sleep much last night; you were so excited
- Now it's your first day ...

Your day begins!

Your manager rushes in and says you will be working with a new intern. He just started today too!

The manager gives you some quick instructions and runs out to deal with some emergency situation.

You and the intern stare at each other.

Now what?

- They gave you a manual when you were hired, but it seems too technical.
- You're tired, really tired.
- You need to go to the bathroom, and you don't know where it is.
- The intern looks like he might cry any minute.

Maybe you should just start your computer ...

- You look all over, but can't find the power button
- The manual just says "turn on the computer." So helpful!
- The intern looks hungry and worried
- This is not how you imagined your dream job

What would you do?
What would help?



What is most helpful?

- The employee manual?
- Your busy manager?
- Your new work colleagues? They have:
 - Experienced what you are going through
 - Found solutions for both big challenges (the computer system) and small ones (finding the washroom)
 - Have empathy for you

Peer support!

To quote the Mental Health Commission of Canada:

Peer support works. Peer support is effective!

Peer support makes the difference!

Research shows:

- Mothers with peer support breastfeed longer and more exclusively
- Peer support can be more effective than support from professionals alone
- Peer support helps mothers feel more confident about breastfeeding and about their mothering



Peer support programs

- There are many different types of breastfeeding peer support programs
- In our program ...

What you offer as a peer support volunteer:

- You are someone who has succeeded at breastfeeding, and you may be the first person this new mother meets who has that experience
- You can empathize with the new mother's challenges and struggles
- You can share practical strategies as you have figured out how to fit breastfeeding into your busy life
- You can listen without judging or criticizing the breastfeeding mother
- You can help mothers find resources, accurate breastfeeding information, and other people in the community to help with breastfeeding problems

Listening is the most important skill for a peer support volunteer!

By listening and asking good questions you:

- Help a breastfeeding mother sort out her feelings
- Help a breastfeeding mother think through her options and possible strategies
- Help a breastfeeding mother find the solutions that are right for her
- Allow a breastfeeding mother to be open to hearing new information and suggestions
- Build a breastfeeding mother's confidence in her ability to manage breastfeeding issues

Activity: Braiding

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Strand number 1

Represents breastfeeding promotion

Breastfeeding promotion can come through social marketing or advocacy from professionals and groups who give parents the information about the importance of breastfeeding



Strand number 2

Represents professional breastfeeding help

Professional help can come from International board Certified Lactation Consultants, public health nurses, physicians, etc. These include all professionals who provide care for the mother and baby and help with medical issues related to breastfeeding (such as tongue-tie, mastitis, etc.)



Strand number 3

Represents peer support

Peer support can come from experienced breastfeeding mothers who help to:

- Normalize breastfeeding
- Provide encouragement and support
- Help mothers transition into their role as mothers
- Help mothers find solutions to their breastfeeding challenges



All three strands, braided together, give the kind of strong support breastfeeding families need



Activity: Braiding

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Thank you!

As a peer support volunteer, you make a big difference for the parents and babies in our community!



Myths and Misinformation about Breastfeeding

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Activity: Myths and Misinformation

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Activity: Feeling Supported

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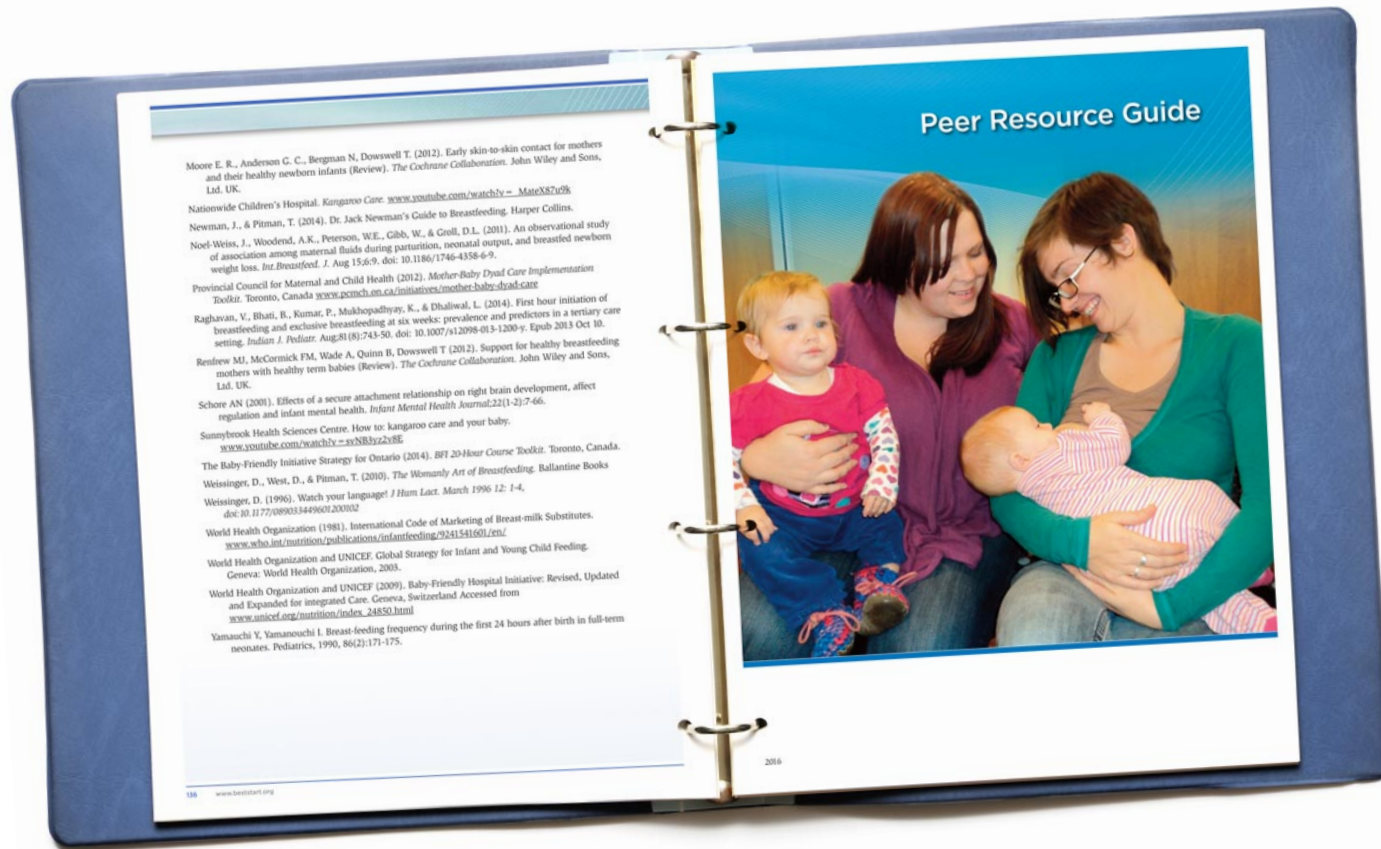
Activity: Feeling Supported

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For each challenge shared consider:

- What was helpful?
- What was not helpful?
- How did unhelpful comments make you feel?





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Peer Resource Guide

